



*DF 400*  
*Working Successfully with the Media*  
*and Public Affairs*

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## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of FEMA's media guidance.
- Describe how to respond to a request for information from a reporter.
- Identify how to prepare for and participate in a media interview.
- Demonstrate skills when participating in an interview.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

The target audience for this training includes FEMA staff at disaster facilities.

## **APPROXIMATE TIME**

1.5 hours

## **CONTENTS**

This course includes the following sections:

- Welcome
- Course Overview
- Introductions
- Building Media Relationships
- Activity: Getting the Message Out
- Working With the Media
- Responding to Requests
- Activity: Practicing a Media Interview
- What If You Can't Call Public Affairs
- Summary

## **PREPARING**

Use the following checklist to help you prepare for this course:

### **Supplies and Equipment**

- Visuals 1 through 18
- Overhead projector with screen or laptop computer and projector
- Chart paper, easels, and markers
- Masking tape
- Name cards
- Pens and note paper

### **Handout Materials**

- Working Successfully with the Media and Public Affairs, Participant Manual
- FEMA 580 "Talking to the Media" October 2006

## **NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS**

Two instructors are recommended for this course, one to play the part of a reporter, and one to observe and give feedback to participants as they practice new skills. The two instructors may also team up to present the content.













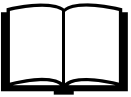


## **INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS**

Instructors should have training experience, as well as previous experience working with the media for FEMA. Ideally, instructors should have experience working in the Public Affairs Office.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

Instructors delivering these course materials should ensure that the course objectives are delivered in their entirety in order to have the course completion recorded in the Automated Deployment Database (ADD). Additional material may be added, based on the need of the audience to enhance the understanding of the subject matter.

**ICONS**

Overhead Projector 	Projector 	videotape 	Easel 	Key Point 	Instructor Note 	Check List / Evaluation form 	Graduation / Diplomas 
Thank You! / Good Job! 	Activity 	Discussion Question 	Summary Transition 	Participant Manual 	Time Saving Tip 	Participant Handout 	

**REFERENCES:**

“Guidance on Working Media Engagement during Disasters” August 24, 2006, R.David Paulison , Director

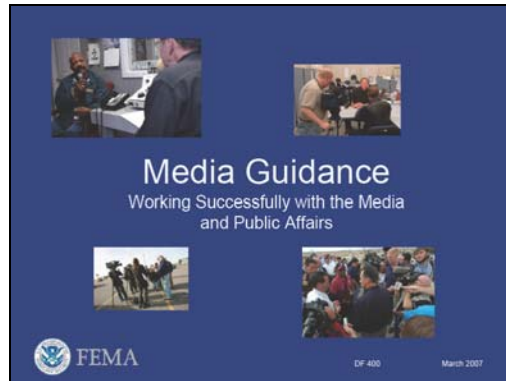
FEMA Publication 580, October 2006: “Talking to the Media”

**WELCOME**

Visual 1

**Begin** by welcoming class

- Introduce yourself

**Review** class rules and safety items:

- Fire exits
- Restrooms
- Turn pagers and cell phones to vibrate.



Visual 2

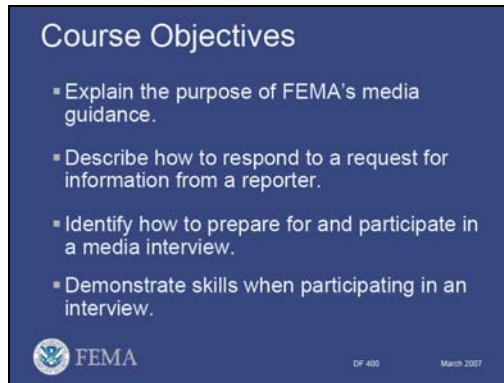


## COURSE OVERVIEW

**Begin** this training by reviewing the following objectives



Visual 3



**Review** the course objectives with the participants.

- Explain the purpose of FEMA's media guidance. (Objective 1, page 7)
- Describe how to respond to a request for information from a reporter. (Objective 2, page 18 and 19)
- Identify how to prepare for and participate in a media interview. (Objective 3, page 21)
- Demonstrate skills when participating in an interview. (Objective 4, page 24)



Information can be as important as food and water to disaster victims. It can help them make informed decisions, it reassures them that the Government is working, and it helps the recovery process to proceed smoothly.

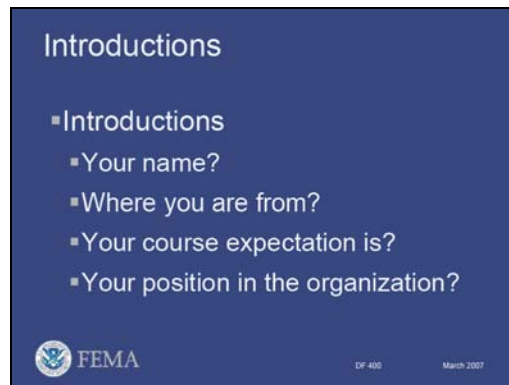
Director Paulison's guidance allows FEMA employees to be proactive in working with, educating and responding to the media during disasters. The guiding principle we should follow is: **"If you own it or are responsible for it, you can talk about it."** (memo dated August 24, 2006). (Objective 1)

The Joint Information Center is staffed with Public Affairs officers whose daily job is to help the recovery effort by getting emergency information to the public and coordinating media relations. As a member of the disaster recovery effort, you too may have a role to play in communicating emergency information to the public.

## INTRODUCTIONS



Visual 4



Have participants introduce themselves

- Name?
- Where they are from?
- Course expectations?
- What position in the organization they hold?



**Distribute** FEMA Publication 580, October 2006: "Talking to the Media" to the class participants.



**BUILDING MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS**

Visual 5

**FEMA is Committed to Building Strong Media Relationships**

- Relationships are built on transparency, responsiveness and credibility.
- Daily engagement with federal, state and local partners.
- Media interest is an opportunity!



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**Explain** the following key points to the participants

- Excellent media relationships are built on transparency, responsiveness, and credibility.
- FEMA engages daily with federal, state and local partners to respond to and coordinate recovery from disasters and the media will be understandably interested in the agency's activities.
- Media interest is an opportunity for the agency to educate the public about what FEMA does before, during and after a disaster.



Visual 6

#### FEMA is Committed to Building Strong Media Relationships

- Providing information to affected communities.
- FEMA employees are the agency's best ambassadors.
- FEMA's reputation is based on that of its employees.



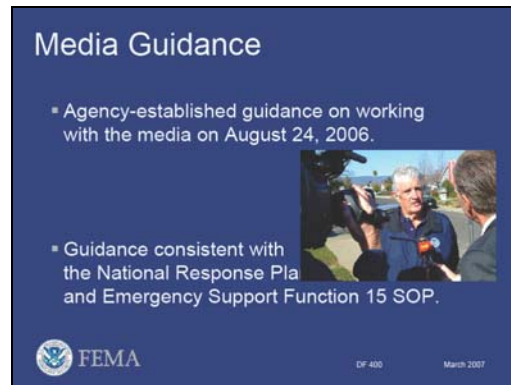
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**Explain** the following key points to the participants

- Media interest in FEMA helps the agency provide information to affected communities about what type of help is available on how to access that assistance.
- FEMA employees are the agency's best assets and its best ambassadors.
- Fundamental to FEMA's reputation is the openness, integrity and credibility of its employees.

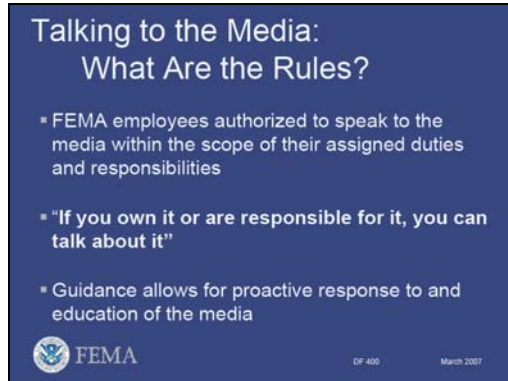


During disaster operations, it is highly likely that FEMA employees who are working in the disaster area will be approached by media.

- In recognition of this, FEMA has established guidance on how FEMA employees work with the media during response and recovery operations.
- The guidance has been established in a memorandum sent to all FEMA employees by FEMA Director David Paulison.
- This memorandum was sent out on August 24, 2006 and is included in the Participant Manual (Handout 1).
- This guidance is consistent with the National Response Plan, Emergency Support Function 15.



Visual 8



**Explain** the following key points to the participants

- As part of response and recovery operations, FEMA employees are authorized to speak to the media, when approached, within the scope of their assigned duties and responsibilities.
- The guiding principle FEMA employees follow when speaking with the media is, ***if you own it or are responsible for it, you can talk about it.***
- What does this media guidance accomplish?
- This media guidance allows us to be proactive in working with, educating and responding to the media during disasters.



Visual 9



### When Talking to the Media, Remember to “Stay in Your Lane.”

- Be straightforward and factual. Provide information about your immediate role and assigned responsibilities. Talk about what you do.
- Avoid speculation and opinions beyond your area of responsibility. This can lead to misleading information to the public.
- If you don't know – say so and refer the question to your FEMA public affairs contact. By helping the reporter get in touch with the right person you can help make sure the information that goes to the public is accurate and up to date.
- Remember, information that is classified, inaccurate, breaches the Privacy act, or involves propriety information should not be released. Employees must abide by Federal laws and regulations in protecting this information.
- The media may cover events where you speak at public meetings or conduct briefings to external audiences. Be professional, factual and within the scope of your responsibilities. Media presence should not hinder you from speaking in these settings.
- When you've made your point, stop talking.

**ACTIVITY GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT****ACTIVITY: GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT**

**Note:** This activity is similar to the game “telephone” often played by children.

**Conduct** the activity as follows:

1. **Tell** participants that to get the class warmed up, you are going to give a statement to one participant. This participant should quietly report this message to the person next to them. **Tell** the participants that they should not write the statement down on paper nor have it repeated. The receiver should then report the statement to the person next to them. **Explain** that the last person at their table group should report the message to a person at the next table group. **Explain** that the message should go around the room until everyone has heard it. The last person to hear the statement should remain silent until the activity is complete.
2. **Explain** that there will actually be two statements, one starting at each end of the room. **Tell** the participants that is OK to talk among one another while they wait for a statement to come to them.
3. **Give** Handout 2 to a student on one side of the room. **Give** Handout 3 to a student on the opposite side of the room.
4. **Tell** the students to start.
5. **Allow** the statements to travel across the room. When it appears that both statements have crossed the room, **draw** the students’ attention back to the front of the room.
6. **Ask** the last students receiving the statements to report their statement as they heard it. **Ask** the first people (who received the handouts) to read the original statement.

**ACTIVITY: GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT (Continued)****7. Facilitate a discussion around the following questions:**

If the students got both statements correct, skip the next question, but continue with the other questions.

**Why do you think the statement(s) got garbled?****Possible responses include:**

- It was hard to understand the content.
- The statement got too far away from the source and too many people tried to interpret it.
- It was not stated very clearly.
- The people talking around me were distracting.

**What affect did the surrounding noise have on understanding the statements?****Possible responses include:**

- It was harder to understand what was being said.
- I had trouble filtering other information out.

**What challenges were faced by the fact that there were two messages?****Possible responses include:**

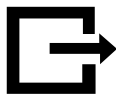
- I was near the middle and I got pulled in two directions.
- I was thinking about what was in the first message when I heard the second message.

**ACTIVITY: GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT (Continued)**

**What challenges do reporters often face when getting information from FEMA?**

**Possible responses include:**

- They are not familiar with FEMA programs and jargon.
- They are getting too much information about the disaster at once.
- They are getting unclear or inconsistent messages.
- They are undergoing personal stress because of the disaster and do not process information well.



Summarize this activity by explaining that the purpose of this course is to help you make sure that reporters get a clear message from FEMA and to avoid many of the problems that the participants faced.

**WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

Visual 10

**Know When to Refer to Public Affairs**

- Importance of accurate information
- Referring inquiries to Public Affairs
  - FEMA, state, local and other federal agency partners.
- Types of questions/inquiries to be referred
  - Leadership decisions
  - Controversial subjects
  - Costs, extent of damage
  - Timelines



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**Review** the following key point:

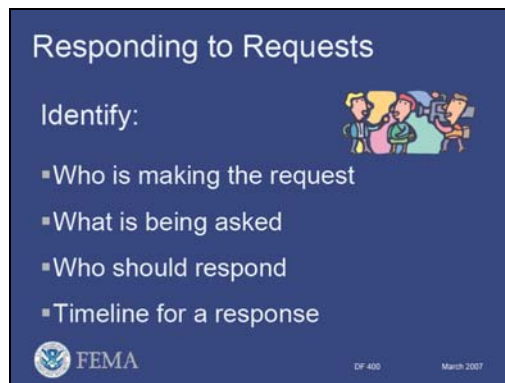
Remember, when speaking with the media we will be demonstrating the capabilities of the agency and the expertise of its employees. This helps establish public trust in FEMA and encourages people to work with the agency during disaster operations.

- As FEMA builds transparency within its organization, accurate information for the public is fundamental.



- To ensure the agency provides the most accurate information to the public, certain questions should be directed to the FEMA public affairs office.
- Questions about multi-agency operations should be coordinated through the appropriate public affairs officer. This include questions about what the state is doing, what the local government is doing, what another federal agency is doing.
- Questions about policy and leadership decision making should be directed to the FEMA public affairs office.
- Generally, questions about controversial subjects, costs, extent of damages, timelines, etc. should be directed to the FEMA public affairs office.

## RESPONDING TO REQUESTS



### Make the following key point:

If approached by a reporter while you are working in the field, determine the best response by considering the following questions: **(Objective 2)**

- **Who is making the request and what is being asked?** Find out who the reporter is and where he/she works. It is important to know if the reporter represents the national media or is high profile for another reason (for example, the representative of a newspaper that has been running negative articles about FEMA). Also, determine if the request for information is within or outside your program area or if it involves policy issues.

- **Who should respond?** If it is a basic question about FEMA programs or pertains to your program area, you should respond—and this course should help you prepare to do so. With the exception of basic answers about FEMA and its programs, you should not comment on issues outside your program area and you should not comment on policy issues.
- **Timeline for a response.** Ask the person making the request for information if he/she has a timeline. Do they need that information before the next edition of their paper, or before the Evening News. If that person is waiting for us and misses their deadline, then we too have missed a deadline.



Can you give an example of a policy question that you should not answer?

Provide the following examples, if necessary:

- “Disasters have gotten quite expensive—will the Federal Government have enough money to pay for damages to our State?”
- “Will FEMA provide assistance to communities that are suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program?”



**Review** the following key point:

You should refer such questions to the Public Affairs. The best response might be: “I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can put you in touch with someone who can respond.”



Visual 12

### Some Things to Remember

- Get reporter's name and contact info – report it back to the Public Affairs office.
- Only provide information within your area of expertise.
- Always keep the Public Affairs number handy.
- Be professional, factual and "stay in your lane".



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### Working with the media – some things to remember

When you talk to a reporter, ask for their name and media outlet and pass this along to the FEMA public affairs office.

- Most of the time, you will encounter reporters that are positive, friendly, and responsible. The way they handle an interview will differ depending upon the media they work for, the type of interview, and their experience.
- A reporter who works for the print media will want more information, details, and background. In contrast, a broadcast reporter's story is limited by time restrictions; the reporter will be looking for quick, concise soundbites.
- The type of interview makes a difference, too. The vast majority of the requests you will receive will be for informational interviews. The reporter will be interested in basic information about the declaration process, assistance programs, recovery efforts, how people apply for assistance, etc.
- An investigative reporter, on the other hand, usually works on a story involving a controversial issue, policy, or procedure. An example would be an interview about illegal aliens and disaster assistance.

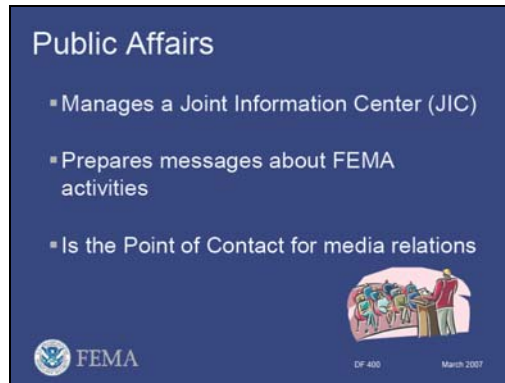
Provide the reporter information that is within your area of expertise – what you do and what you know – and help reporters get answers to other questions by referring them to the FEMA public affairs office.

- Keep handy the number for the FEMA public affairs office.
- Be professional, factual and stay in your lane.
- Review FEMA 580 – Talking to the media for additional tips and techniques.

## Public Affairs



Visual 13



Now, let's discuss what to do when you are asked to participate in an interview about your program.

- Public Affairs generally coordinates and schedules all media interviews. Public Affairs works with the media and is the JFO's primary point of contact for the media.
- A Joint Information Center works to ensure that all partners in the disaster response and recovery effort provide consistent information to the media and the public. (Partners include State Emergency Management, all Federal agencies, local, and voluntary organizations.)
- Inconsistent messages create confusion in the disaster victim's mind. When people experience confusion, they often feel paralyzed and unable to make good decisions.



Visual 14



In addition to reporter's inquiries in the field, you may be asked by Public Affairs to participate in an interview about your program. Public Affairs can work with you to prepare for your interview. They can make sure that your messages are consistent and do not create confusion. **(Objective 3)**

- The first step in preparing for an interview is to know what you want to say. Keep your message simple. Restrict yourself to three key points.
- As you prepare what you want to say, keep in mind that you have to **manage the reporter's and the public's expectations**. Remember that disaster assistance is a helping hand, but it cannot make people whole again. In other words, don't make promises FEMA can't keep, or overstate what we can offer.
- Managing expectations: "FEMA can provide a helping hand, but it can't make you whole again."
  - Teleregistration: "Calling the toll-free number is the first step in getting assistance."
  - Partnership: "We are here in support of the State and to help disaster victims begin the recovery process."
- You should also formulate objectives. These should stress outcomes, such as: an increase in calls to the teleregistration number, or inform victims about contractor fraud.
- Don't just prepare for the questions the reporter is likely to ask. Every interaction with the media is an opportunity to get your message to the public. Know what you want to say. Write down your essential messages and objectives.

- Stay on message and stick with what you know. Make sure that you're giving the media the same information that they will be hearing from other Federal, State, and local governments. This helps victims to feel that their governments are out there for them, working together to help.
- The last step is to PRACTICE. If you can, practice answering likely questions and getting your message out in front of other people.



Visual 15



- Remember, address your key messages and communication objectives. Don't answer just "yes" or "no" to questions. Acknowledge the reporters question, then go to your message. You can say something like "The important point is" or "The real issue is . . ."
- Reporters are looking for short, concise replies. For a radio or television reporter, these quick 30-second statements are often called "soundbites." Some people tend to ramble on—don't do it. Try to confine your answers to 15- to 30-second segments.
- Practice transitional phrases to help you stay in your lane:
  - That is not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...
  - What's most important is...
  - I can best answer that by saying...
  - People have asked why we...
  - What I'm really here to talk to you about is...

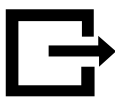
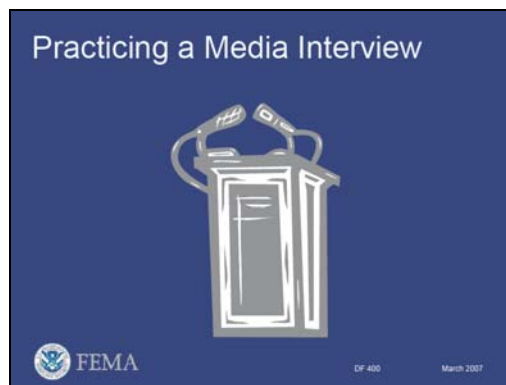
- Don't give too much information. Keep your explanations as short and simple as possible. Otherwise, you may confuse the reporter, and by extension, the public.
- Avoid acronyms and jargon, you are confusing the media and the public. You are also setting up barriers, creating an "us and them" situation. Communicate in terms all people can understand.
- Don't repeat a damaging phrase that a reporter uses. For example, one time there was a meeting at a site where 100 people were expected, and materials were prepared for that many people, and much to their surprise 300 showed up. A reporter asked a FEMA Public Affairs staff member, "Are you overwhelmed?" The person responded, "Yes, we're overwhelmed." The next day, the newspaper headline read: "FEMA Overwhelmed."
- Never discuss policy issues unless you've been directly authorized to do so



**Distribute** Handout 4: Presentation Tips to the students and **tell** them it contains more tips on participating in an interview. **Give** them a few moments to read through the tips.



Visual 16



Tell the participants that they will be given an opportunity to prepare for and practice an interview.

**ACTIVITY: PRACTICING A MEDIA INTERVIEW****ACTIVITY: PRACTICING A MEDIA INTERVIEW****(Objective 4)**

Prior to the activity, identify the background or program areas of the class participants. When conducting an interview, select the most appropriate questions for their expertise. If a person is not from one of the specified program areas, select from the list of General Questions (provided in the Participant Manual), program questions you feel are appropriate, or create new questions.

**Conduct** the activity as follows:

1. **Tell** students that a local reporter in the field has approached them. They've collected the information about the reporter and called the Joint Information Center. Public Affairs has requested that they talk to the reporter about their particular expertise.
2. **Distribute** Handout 5: Assessment Criteria and **tell** the students that the interviews will be evaluated according to the criteria on the handout.
3. **Explain** that before they are interviewed, you are going to give them a few minutes to prepare. **Explain** that they will first develop one key message for their program area and then practice with a partner before you conduct the interviews.
4. **Write** the following on chart paper: "Disaster Assistance is a helping hand, but it cannot make you whole again."
5. **Distribute** Handout 6: Sample Questions and Answers to the students and **tell** them that it contains sample questions and recommended ways to answer them.
6. **Tell** the students to take **5 minutes** to develop one key message for their program area.
7. After 5 minutes, **have** the students pair up. **Tell** the students that they should ask their partner one question from their program area and give them an opportunity to practice responding. **Explain** that after the first person has responded, they should switch and have the second person practice responding. **Tell** the students that you will give them 10 minutes to practice.







8. **Give** the students **10 minutes** to practice.
9. **Interview** each student using three to four total questions pulled from the general section and their specific program area. (Optional: If you are teaching this course with another instructor, one person can play the reporter, while the other one observes and offers feedback to students. Also, if you have access to a video camera, videotape the students and then play back the interviews at the end of the activity so that the students can evaluate how they came across on camera.)
10. **Give** feedback to the students after each interview, based on the assessment criteria in Handout 5.
11. **Summarize** the activity, by telling the students to review their performance and use the tips in the handout to help them practice and improve.

## WHAT IF YOU CAN'T CALL PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Conclude** the activity by adding:

- This activity assumed that the request for information went through the Joint Information Center. What happens when the reporter's deadline is tight, and there's no Public Affairs person there with you?
- Always try to check in with Public Affairs. Use a cell phone and call right from the field if you can.
- Let's say you're going door-to-door and a reporter asks you what's going on, and you can't make that call to Public Affairs. You can very simply describe what you're doing by saying "My function is . . ."
- Respond to any other questions with "That's beyond the scope of what I'm doing." Offer to have someone call the reporter with the information he/she needs.


## SUMMARY



Visual 17

**Summary**

- Practice explaining who you are, what you do, and how your job helps people.
- Prepare before you do a media interview.
- Learn what not to do.
- Keep control of the interview by learning transitional phrases.



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### **Review** the following key points

- Practice explaining who you are, what you do, and how your job helps people.
- Prepare before you do a media interview.
- Learn what not to do.
- Keep control of the interview by learning transitional phrases.




Visual 18

### **Ask** the participants to complete the course evaluation form.

**Evaluation**

Please take a few moments to fill out your Evaluation and hand them into the instructor.

Your input is important to us!



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Visual 19



## MEDIA GUIDANCE

Office of the Director  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20472



**FEMA**

August 24, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: All FEMA Employees

FROM: R. David Paulison   
Director

SUBJECT: Guidance on Working Media Engagement during Disasters

Excellent media relationships are built on transparency, responsiveness, and credibility. We engage daily with our federal, state and local partners to respond to and coordinate recovery from disasters and media will be understandably interested in our activities. It is important that we leverage this interest to educate the public about what FEMA does before, during and after a disaster. During disaster operations, it is highly likely that FEMA employees who are working in the disaster area will be approached by media. With this in mind, I want to establish guidance on how FEMA employees work with the media during response and recovery operations. The following guidance is consistent with ESF 15 SOP (Appendix 1 to Annex F, Section 3.2).

As part of response and recovery operations, FEMA employees are authorized to speak to the media, when approached, within the scope of their assigned duties and responsibilities. The guiding principle you should follow is: *If you own it or are responsible for it, you can talk about it.*

This media guidance allows us to be proactive in working with, educating and responding to the media during disasters. In employing this standard, employees must keep the following in mind:

- Information should be straightforward and factual, and pertain to your immediate role and assigned responsibilities. Talk about what you do. Speculation, opinions and assessment beyond your area of responsibility should be avoided.
- If you don't know—say so and refer the question to your Public Affairs contact for assistance.
- As a reminder, information that is classified, breaches the Privacy Act, or involves proprietary information should not be released and employees must abide by Federal laws and regulations in protecting this information;
- Expect that when you speak at public meetings or conduct briefings with partner organizations, it may be covered by the media. As with all interactions with agency customers, comments should be professional, factual and within the scope of your responsibilities. Media presence should not hinder you from speaking in these settings;

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

## Media Engagement Guidance

August 24, 2006

Page two

- Responses to questions that involve multi-agency operations should be coordinated through the appropriate Joint Information Centers, Regional Public Affairs Officer, or HQ Office of Public Affairs;
- Questions about policy and senior leadership decision making should be directed to FEMA's Office of Public Affairs.

Our Public Affairs Officers provide valuable counsel in working with the media, and so in day-to-day activities, I ask that you continue to coordinate any requests for interviews, information or comment on agency programs and issues. In addition, any contact planned with media organizations, such as that required to proactively place story ideas or provide general information, should be coordinated in advance with Public Affairs as well. Questions regarding speaking to the media should be directed to FEMA's Office of Public Affairs.

FEMA employees are our best assets and our best ambassadors. Fundamental to FEMA's reputation is our openness, integrity and credibility. As we build this transparency within our organization, we will demonstrate the capabilities and experience of our agency, restore the nation's trust in our abilities, and show that FEMA is the preeminent national level agency for emergency management.

Thank you for your continued dedication and service to the public.

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**GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT  
Handout 2**



**Statement # 1**

Because the hurricane caused 10-foot waves and a terrible riptide, all but the most reckless surfers rode out the storm at the Big Kahuna Grill.

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**GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT  
Handout 3**



**Statement #2**

Surfing the Internet is a good way to research hurricane waves and riptides if you know how to access search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

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## PRESENTATION TIPS

### Handout 4



- Use language everyone can understand. No acronyms, jargon or complicated terms.
- Listen to the entire question before you respond. If the question has multiple parts, ask the interviewer to repeat parts of it and/or select the part you want to answer, then stop talking.
- If it's a TV or radio interview, assume the camera or microphone is always on. Don't say anything you don't want repeated. Never assume anything is "off-the-record."
- Think before answering.
- Never argue or debate the interviewer, even if the question is hostile.
- For broadcast interviews, beware of the "speedup" technique in which the reporter pulls the microphone away from you before you have finished your complete thought. Also, beware of the "stall" technique in which the interviewer leaves the microphone in front of your face, waiting for you to say more. If you don't intend to say more, look at the interviewer, smile, and wait for him or her to respond.
- When asked a question about another agency's program, refer the reporter to the appropriate spokesperson for that agency. Do not try to explain the details of other agency programs.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions. The answers will come back to haunt you.
- If you don't know the answer to a question . . .
- Clarify the question and write it down.
- Promise to find the correct answer and tell the reporter when you will respond.
- Consult with a lead PAO and program specialist, as necessary. If it's a policy question, the PAO will refer the reporter to the designated spokesperson.
- Don't make up an answer or say something you're not sure is accurate.
- Never say "no comment."

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA Handout 5



Listed below are the criteria against which you will be evaluated during this activity.

### How You Look and Sound

- o Appropriate eye contact
- o Lack of nervous gestures
- o Open body language/attentive posture/warmth
- o Composure
- o Appropriate pacing
- o Lack of fillers

### What You Say

- o Addressed key message
- o Easy-to-understand language
- o Short, concise answers
- o Provided accurate information
- o Avoided unnecessary details
- o Knew when NOT to answer a question
- o Knew how to handle a question when he/she didn't know the answer

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS Handout 6



### General Questions:

**1. What kind of help is available to residents whose homes have been damaged in the flooding?**

In answering this question, it is not to attempt to describe all disaster assistance programs in detail (remember, 10 to 15 seconds). Instead, the response should inform the interviewer that several assistance programs are offered by FEMA as well as other organizations. Then the interviewee should mention a few. If the interviewee mentions assistance such as SBA loans, it is critical that the description makes it clear this is an SBA program. The interviewee should instruct viewers to call the teleregistration number or helpline (provide the telephone numbers).

Sample Soundbite:

“Several programs are offered by FEMA, the State, and other organizations. These include temporary housing grants, disaster unemployment assistance, Individuals and Households Program Grants, and Small Business Administration loans.”

**2. Who is eligible for assistance?**

Again, the interviewee should not try to give a comprehensive list of people who may be eligible for different programs. The interviewee should explain, however, that anyone who has suffered damage to property or loss of income may apply for assistance. The interviewee should point out that there are many different programs available to assist with people's needs, and that each of these programs has different eligibility requirements. The interviewee should inform anyone who needs assistance to call the teleregistration number or the helpline, or visit one of the application centers.

Sample Soundbite:

“Anyone who has suffered damage to property or loss of income may apply for assistance. FEMA encourages them to register by calling **1-800-621-3362**

**1-800-462-7585 (TTY)**

”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



***General Questions: (Continued)***

**3. How does someone apply for assistance?**

Call the teleregistration number.

Sample Soundbite:

“The quickest and easiest way to apply for assistance is to call FEMA at  
**1-800-621-3362 or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY)**”

**4. What is FEMA’s policy on reimbursing the State for expenses?**

The student should not answer this question.

Sample Soundbite:

“I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can take your information and have someone who can respond, get in touch with you.”

**5. Congress is looking into FEMA’s budget. How will this affect FEMA’s delivery of assistance?**

The student should not answer this question.

Sample Soundbite:

“I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can take your information and have someone who can respond get in touch with you.”

**6. Congress is proposing drastic cuts in Federal spending. What is FEMA’s position on the budget?**

The student should not answer this question.

Sample Soundbite:

“I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can take your information and have someone who can respond, get in touch with you.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Human Services Questions:**

**1. Is any assistance available for renters?**

Yes. Renters who are unable to return to their homes should call the teleregistration number to apply for assistance.

Sample Soundbite:

*"Yes there is. Renters who are unable to return to their homes should call FEMA at 1-800-621-3362 or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY)"*

**2. Do disaster victims need to take an income test to determine if they are allowed to apply for assistance?**

No, disaster assistance is for everyone. It is true that on the FEMA application, people are asked to specify their family income. This is an initial screening for the SBA. No matter what, some families just will not qualify for a loan. Also, it is important that we don't duplicate benefits. So if insurance or a loan meets a need, grants would not be provided.

Sample Soundbite:

*"No. Disaster assistance is for anyone who has been affected by the disaster."*

**3. How soon could a homeowner expect to receive money?**

If the Interviewee has researched this question properly, he or she has learned from the Federal Coordinating Officer that it is okay to give an estimate of 7-10 days.

If they do not provide this estimate, assess how well they handle a question for which they do not know the answer. Hopefully, they will not make up their own estimate.

Sample Soundbite:

*"Each individual is different, but on average a person may receive help within 7 to 10 days following an inspection."*

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Human Services Questions: (Continued)**

- 4. We've heard a number of complaints that the teleregistration number is always busy. Is FEMA having trouble handling the calls, and do you have any advice for people who are trying to get through?**

Evening is the best time to call the teleregistration number. Avoid peak hours of 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Sample Soundbite:

"No. There are no problems, but we do encourage people to call in the evenings and avoid peak hours during the morning."

- 5. How soon could a homeowner expect to receive money?**

If the Interviewee has researched this question properly, he or she has learned from the Federal Coordinating Officer that it is okay to give an estimate of 7-10 days.

If they do not provide this estimate, assess how well they handle a question for which they do not know the answer. Hopefully, they will not make up their own estimate.

Sample Soundbite:

"Each individual is different, but on average a person may receive help within 7 to 10 days following inspection."

- 6. I have heard that SBA will give loans to homeowners as well. Who can get them?**

Homeowners and renters, as well as business owners may be eligible for low-interest disaster loans for the repair or replacement of disaster damaged real estate or personal property that is not covered by insurance.

Sample Soundbite:

"Homeowners and renters as well as businesses may be eligible, including self-employed people."



**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Flood Insurance Questions:**

**1. How does someone get flood insurance?**

Flood insurance is offered only through the National Flood Insurance Program. It can be purchased directly or written by the same insurance agents that write property loss insurance.

Sample Soundbite:

“You can buy flood insurance from your regular insurance agent or you can get it directly from the National Flood Insurance Program.”

**2. If Federal disaster assistance pays for losses, what is the point of getting flood insurance?**

There are several advantages for the policyholder:

- The amount of disaster aid is limited by regulation. Flood insurance policies can cover more types of personal property and can be of higher value than disaster aid limits.
- Disaster assistance is not available on every flood event; only those that are declared Federal disasters.
- Unlike a disaster loan, flood insurance payments do not have to be repaid.
- Emotional security.

Sample Soundbite:

“Disaster aid is only available during Presidentially declared disasters. It is limited and often in the form of a loan that must be repaid. Flood insurance claims are paid whether there is a disaster or not.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Flood Insurance Questions: (Continued)**

**3. What kinds of flood insurance coverage are available?**

Homeowners, renters, and business owners are eligible to apply for flood insurance. Homeowners may purchase coverage for structure, contents, and/or home businesses. Renters may purchase coverage for contents. Business owners may purchase coverage for structure and/or contents.

Sample Soundbite:

“Policies may be purchased to cover personal property and contents, business property and contents, and home businesses. Both owners and renters are eligible to buy coverage.”

**4. How expensive is flood insurance? What are the average premiums?**

Flood insurance rates are very affordable when you compare them to the cost of rebuilding a home. Rates vary depending upon the likelihood of flooding in that location.

Sample Soundbite:

“Flood insurance is a tremendous bargain. When you think of the cost of rebuilding a flooded home, or the years of loan payments ... flood insurance is definitely a smart decision.”

**5. Are people who have flood insurance eligible for help from FEMA as well?**

Possibly. Apply for disaster assistance because Federal and State disaster assistance programs may be able to help with costs not covered by flood or homeowners insurance.

Sample Soundbite:

“Possibly. Disaster assistance programs may help with costs not covered by insurance or if a person is underinsured.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Mitigation Questions:**

**1. Who can get HMGP funds?**

These entities are eligible to apply to the State for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding: State and local governments, Private non-profit organizations or institutions, Native American Tribes and Alaskan Native Villages.

Sample Soundbite:

“State and local governments, private non-profits, and Native American Tribes are eligible to apply for grant funds.”

**2. How much assistance is available through the HMGP?**

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program may provide a State with up to 15 percent of the total disaster grants awarded by FEMA after a major disaster declaration (not including administrative costs). These grants may fund up to 75 percent of eligible mitigation measures. The State or local government provides the remaining 25 percent cost-share from non-Federal sources.

Sample Soundbite:

“The HMGP award can equal up to a certain percentage of the total grants awarded after a major disaster.” “I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can take your information and have someone who can respond, get in touch with you.”

**3. If approved, when will Ryan County get its grant?**

Grants are awarded by FEMA to the State. The State then disperses the funds to sub-grantees. A managing State that has a viable Administrative Plan and a current Hazard Mitigation Plan, reviewed within the previous 12 months, may receive the grant award prior to the completion of project applications.

Sample Soundbite:

“As the State disperses the money to counties, you may want to ask the State Hazard Mitigation Officer. But, most funds are working within 18 months.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Mitigation Questions: (Continued)**

**4. What kinds of projects might be eligible for HMGP funds?**

Some types of eligible projects include:

- Acquisition of hazard-prone property and conversion to open space;
- Retrofitting existing buildings;
- Vegetative Management/soil stabilization;
- Infrastructure protection measures;
- Stormwater management;
- Minor structural flood control projects; and
- State management costs.

Sample Soundbite:

“Projects may be of any nature that will result in protection to public or private property. Examples include acquiring hazard-prone properties and retrofitting existing buildings.”

**5. What are the minimum eligibility criteria for HMGP projects?**

There are five minimum criteria that all projects must meet to in order to be considered for funding:

- Conforms with State Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Provides beneficial impact upon disaster area.
- Conforms with environmental regulations.
- Solves a problem independently or constitutes a functional portion of a solution.
- Demonstrates cost-effectiveness.

Sample Soundbite:

“Primarily, a project should be a cost-effective mitigating measure that is consistent with the State’s overall hazard mitigation strategy and does not adversely affect the environment.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Public Assistance Questions:**

**1. What is the Public Assistance program?**

Public Assistance is Federal financial assistance provided to State and local governments or to eligible private non-profit organizations for work that must be done, through repairs or replacement, to restore an eligible facility on the basis of its pre-disaster design and in conformity with current applicable codes, specifications, and standards.

Sample Soundbite:

“The Public Assistance program reimburses governments and eligible non-profits for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair of disaster-damaged infrastructure—like roads and bridges.”

**2. Does FEMA require that public structures be rebuilt to be less prone to future disasters?**

FEMA supports rebuilding public structures to current local and State building codes. This often results in buildings that are less prone to future damage.

Sample Soundbite:

“FEMA Administrator....., has made reducing future damage the focal point of the agency. Building less vulnerable structures in safer areas is the primary way to reduce disaster costs and damage.”

**3. What portion of PA projects is funded by FEMA?**

Typically, FEMA funds XXX percent. The remaining XXX percent is paid by the State and/or local government. The Federal share may be increased at Presidential discretion.

Sample Soundbite:

“Generally, FEMA pays XXX percent.” “I’m really not the best person to answer that question, but I can take your information and have someone who can respond, get in touch with you.”

**Sample Questions  
Handout 6 (continued)**



**Public Assistance Questions: (Continued)**

**4. Does the PA program allow improvements to damaged facilities?**

Section 409 of the Stafford Act authorizes repair of facilities to applicable codes and standards. It also requires State and local governments to prepare and implement hazard mitigation plans. In these plans, State and local governments evaluate the natural hazards in the designated disaster area and identify appropriate actions to mitigate such hazards. This hazard mitigation planning is both required under Section 409 and a prerequisite for eligibility for Section 404 funds.

Sample Soundbite:

“Repairs may include improvements if those measures bring the facility up to current codes and standards.”

**5. How are Public Assistance projects identified?**

The State identifies potential applicants in all declared counties. Joint FEMA-State briefings are scheduled to provide information about the scope of the Public Assistance program. Damage inspection teams verify and assess damage. Applications are reviewed for eligibility.

Sample Soundbite:

“Eligible governments and private, non-profit organizations submit applications based upon a briefing packet provided at joint FEMA-State meetings.”

**6. What criteria determine the eligibility of a private non-profit organization?**

The organization must present the Federal IRS tax exemption or State certification of tax-exempt status from the State attorney general or Secretary of the affected State. Facilities belonging to an eligible organization may or may not be eligible depending upon the services provided there. Eligible facilities include: educational facilities; utilities; emergency; medical; custodial care; and those providing essential services of a governmental nature to the general public (i.e., zoo, library, homeless shelter, community center).

Sample Soundbite:

“Organizations that have tax-exempt status are usually eligible.”

Please take a moment to complete the following items.  
Your input may help to improve future training sessions.  
Thank you!



**Date of Course** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Instructor(s)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Disaster Number** \_\_\_\_\_

1. The instructor was knowledgeable and well-prepared.

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree    \_\_\_ Agree    \_\_\_ Disagree    \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. The instructor provided time for questions and review and encouraged group participation.

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree    \_\_\_ Agree    \_\_\_ Disagree    \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. The instructor related the material to disaster work and used FEMA-related examples.

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree    \_\_\_ Agree    \_\_\_ Disagree    \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Based on your Requestor/Supervisor/Program Manager's expectations from this course, will you be able to meet or exceed them? Why? Or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Overall, how would you rate this course.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Very Good    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Adequate    \_\_\_ Poor

6. Please list additional training that would benefit your JFO work or benefit the JFO workforce in general.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_